

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CU-02 USIA-06 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00

SS-15 NSC-05 PRS-01 PA-01 SIL-01 LAB-04 SAJ-01 SP-02

/058 W

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R 231524Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9559

INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 5677

E.O. 11652: XGDS-4

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, UR, US

SUBJECT: AKSENOV RECEIVEDS PERMISSION TO LECTURE AT UCLA

REF: MOSCOW 3548 AND PREVIOUS

1. AUTHOR VASILIIY AKSENOV INFORMED AMBASSADOR AT SPASO HOUSE FILM SHOWING APRIL 22 THAT HE HAD BEEN GIVEN PERMISSION FOR VISIT TO UCLA AS GUEST PROFESSOR AND LECTURER FOR SPRING TERM (REFTEL). AKSENOV LATER TOLD EMBOFF THAT DOCUMENTS FOR TRAVEL ARE NOW BEING PROCESSED AND THAT HE EXPECTED TO LEAVE QUITE SOON. HE WAS EXTREMELY APPRECIATIVE OF EMBASSY EFFORTS IN HIS BEHALF AND FELT THEY HAD PLAYED MAJOR ROLE IN DECISION BY AUTHORITIES TO AUTHORIZE HIS VISIT. AKSENOV SAID THAT WRITERS UNION HAD ATTEMPTED TO BLOCK VISIT UP TO THE END AND THAT ONLY BY APPLYING PRESSURE THROUGH DECLARATION TO CP CENTRAL COMMITTEE, ALONG WITH AMBASSADOR'S AND P AND C COUNSELOR'S CONTINUED EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST, HAD HE BEEN ABLE TO FORCE OUT FAVORABLE DECISION. HE FELT WRITERS UNION OPPOSITION WAS MAINLY MATTER OF PROFESSIONAL JEALOUSY, AS WELL AS CONCERN FOR LOSS OF CONTROL OVER SELECTION OF WRITERS FOR TRIPS ABROAD. AKSENOV UNDERSTANDS THAT DECISION ON VISIT WAS PUSHED
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UP QUITE HIGH IN CENTRAL COMMITTEE AND THAT ULTIMATELY

IT WAS MADE AT THE LEVEL OF THE "GROUP AROUND
ALEKSANDROV" (BREZHNEV'S PERSONAL AIDE). AKSENOV
THOUGHT USA INSTITUTE DIRECTOR GEORGIY ARBATOV
ALSO HAD ROLE IN DECISION.

2. COMMENT: AKSENOV'S LENGTHY STRUGGLE TO VISIT U.S.
ILLUSTRATES DIFFICULTIES FACED BY NON-CONFORMIST,
BUT STILL OFFICIALLY ACCEPTED, CULTURAL FIGURES,
PARTICULARLY FROM CONSERVATIVE LEADERSHIPS OF CREATIVE
UNIONS. TO LATTER, TRAVEL ABROAD IS IMPORTANT SOURCE
OF CONTROL AND PATRONAGE WHICH IS JEALOUSLY GUARDED.
AKSENOV CASE ALSO SHOWS THAT PERSISTENCE AND INTELLIGENT
APPLICATION OF PRESSURE IN RIGHT PLACES CAN PAY OFF.
WE FIND IT INTERESTING THAT SOME, LIKE AKSENOV AND
SCULPTOR ERNST NEIZVESTNIY (WHOSE APPLICATION TO LEAVE
IS STILL PENDING), SEE CENTRAL COMMITTEE CONTACTS AS
OFFERING THEM SOME LEVERAGE AND WAY OF GETTING
AROUND NEGATIVE ATTITUDES OF CREATIVE UNION
BUREAUCRACIES. PERCEPTION SEEMS TO BE THAT CENTRAL
COMMITTEE APPARATUS IS GENERALLY MORE BROAD-MINDED
AND WILLING TO TAKE MORE FLEXIBLE APPROACH IN SITUATIONS
WHERE POTENTIAL FOREIGN POLICY PROBLEMS ARE PRESENT.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 23 APR 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: greeneet
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975MOSCOW05677
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X4
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750143-0345
From: MOSCOW
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750425/aaaaawxc.tel
Line Count: 84
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 MOSCOW 3548
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: greeneet
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 13 JUN 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <13 JUN 2003 by izenbei0>; APPROVED <24 OCT 2003 by greeneet>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: AKSENOV RECEIVEDS PERMISSION TO LECTURE AT UCLA
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, UR, US, (MUBAREZ, SALEH MUSED), (MUSHED, TAHER)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006